



Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Jackson Region

January 2016 Newsletter



Mountain Goat Research Continues

For the fourth straight year, local Game and Fish personnel, along with researchers from Montana State University, captured and collared mountain goats in the Snake River Canyon near Alpine. The research was initiated in 2013 with four collared in December and a total of 16 goats captured and collared in the area to date. The goal is to learn more about the health of the herd, their seasonal movements and survival. The local effort is also part of a larger research project called the Greater Yellowstone Mountain Ungulate Project being led by Montana State University in conjunction with wildlife managers of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana.

Mountain goats were first introduced in the Snake River Range by the Idaho Fish & Game Department over a three year period from 1969-1971. Since that time, the goats have slowly, but steadily, expanded their range into Wyoming. An aerial survey completed in 1996 noted 24 goats in Wyoming. The latest survey completed in August of 2014 recorded 165. The goats have not only increased in number, but also their distribution, with animals (primarily billies) now being sighted in the Wyoming and Salt Ranges and both sexes in the Teton Range.

In order to provide a recreational opportunity, and help curb the growth, the WGFD implemented a hunting season for the Palisades herd in 1999, offering four licenses. The number of licenses was increased to eight in 2005 and again to 12 in 2015.



Photos: (Clockwise from left) 1) Blake Lowery (MSU) and Jackson Brucellosis Biologist Ben Wise fasten a GPS collar 2) Fralick gets standard measurements 3) Fralick and crew prepare to dart a roadside goat 4) Ben Wise draws a blood sample 5) A collared billie is stabilized by Alpine Game Warden Jordan Winter as it regains its feet.



Photos by Mark Gocke, WGFD



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

January 2016

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

Bison Hunters Finish Strong

Some hunts the Game and Fish Department administrators require more time and effort than others and the bison hunt is definitely one of those. It is the longest big game hunting season in the region running from August 15-January 15, although most bison are often not in an open hunt area, primarily the National Elk Refuge, for much of that.

Nearly all of the Jackson Region Wildlife Division become involved in the hunt to some degree, starting with the office managers. Starting in June, office managers mail a packet of information to all successful draw applicants. After that, they assist many hunters in applying for their access permits for the National Elk Refuge, go over hunt area boundaries, vehicle access roads, etc. Then they will take multiple calls from hunters throughout the season as to



Jackson office manager Nicole Hornberger collects a successful hunter's harvest report and listens to his story on the final day of the hunt season.

whether the ani-

mals are migrating, in a legal hunt area, the weather forecast, etc. And finally, they collect each hunter's mandatory harvest report and bison teeth. It is mandatory for all hunters to report their harvest within 72 hours after the hunt season ends.

Jackson Region game wardens and biologists spend countless days throughout the season monitoring bison movements, assisting hunters and generally managing the hunt. The workload becomes especially busy later in the season. If winter conditions are mild, like this year, bison often remain in Grand Teton National Park and unavailable to hunters. This can make for some disgruntled hunters. After a very low harvest, some groups of bison did finally make their way onto the National Elk Refuge late in the season this year. Violations haven't been excessive, but hunters harvesting a young bull on a cow license remains the most common, which generally results in the confiscation of the animal.

The Jackson Bison herd has been well above the 500 animal population objective for many years, estimated at roughly 800 in 2015. This season, hunters harvested just under 200 bison, which should nudge the

population a little closer towards the population objective, even when considering there will probably be about 175 calves born this coming May.



Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens visits with a successful father-daughter hunt team.



Craig Burhoop, of Sioux Falls, SD, is all smiles after finally connecting on his second trip out to Jackson Hole.



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

January 2016

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People



Moving Elk

In January, all three Jackson Region game wardens responded to reports of elk damage associated with livestock. In some cases several regional personnel were gathered to try and move elk away from private lands, and in some cases to establish elk feedgrounds.

North Jackson Game Warden Jon

(Above) Jackson Game Warden Jon Stephens hurries to open a gate and get ahead of a group of elk (below) before they get to a nearby pocket of timber. Ideally, the elk need to be moved a good distance away from private land hay so that they are less likely to return.



Stephens responded to a report of a group of elk frequenting private lands in the Buffalo Valley. He and regional per-

sonnel have made multiple attempts to haze them away from private land to native winter range on the nearby Bridger Teton National Forest and and Grand Teton National Park to the south and west.



Warden Stephens attempts to push elk a little further away from private lands by firing a few whistling cracker shells.

Assessing the Groceries

Aly Courtemanch, North Jackson wildlife biologist, monitored snow and forage conditions on the National Elk Refuge with Eric Cole, refuge biologist. Every year, snow and forage conditions are monitored from late December into January to determine when to initiate elk supplemental feeding. Biologists measure snow depth and density, as well as forage lbs/acre. Typically, Aly and Eric recommend that supplemental feeding begins when available forage declines below 300 lbs/acre. As of late December, forage conditions were well above this threshold. Past observations indicate that elk are likely to leave the Elk Refuge once this threshold is reached. When elk leave the Elk Refuge, they often move to private lands in Spring Gulch where livestock comingling and damage concerns exist.



National Elk Refuge biologist Eric Cole measures forage pounds per acre and snow conditions at a monitoring site on the National Elk Refuge.



Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

January 2016

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People



Elk in a What?

Jackson Wildlife personnel received an unusual call that an elk had fallen into a concrete cistern near Alpine. Game Wardens Jordan Winter, Kyle Lash, Todd Graham and Wildlife Management Coordinator Doug Brimeyer responded to the scene to find just that. The team decided the safest option was to immobilize the elk. Once the animal was down, wardens Lash and Winters crawled into the cistern, wrapped a tarp around the elk and the team was able to hoist it out. After removing the elk, managers relocated the young cow to the Alpine elk feedground where it was released no worse for the wear. I'm guessing the elk will be more careful where it steps from here on out.



Safety First

Several Wildlife Division personnel from both the Jackson and Pinedale regions attended a two-day training on avalanche awareness and winter survival provided by the Bridger Teton National Forest. (Right) Personnel use their transceivers, probes and shovels to conduct a mock rescue effort to uncover four buried backpacks, three containing beacons.





Jackson Region Monthly Newsletter

January 2016

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

A Beaver Predicament

On December 12, Afton Game Warden Todd Graham received a report of a beaver trapped in the Lower Swift Creek Reservoir spillway. Warden Graham responded to the scene and sure enough, there was an adult beaver in the spillway. The high concrete walls and the layer of ice on everything were preventing the beaver from getting out. A couple of logs were placed in the spillway to assist the animal's escape, but a check the next day revealed that the beaver was still there. The beaver was removed from the spillway the following day.



Ice On! Fish on!

Ice had finally formed on Jackson Lake by mid-December and anglers wasted no time in trying their luck. Most anglers have had good luck catching lake trout. Slide lake in the Gros Ventre drainage has had ice much longer and several nice lake trout have been reported being caught there already.



(Left) Jackson Game & Fish Office Manager Nicole Hornberger is pretty jazzed with a beautiful lake trout she pulled from Jackson lake on January 17. Nicole joined the Jackson Game and Fish front office staff at the end of October 2015. After growing up a "city girl" in Riverside, CA, Nicole has taken a liking to all things hunting and fishing. This was her first time ice fishing- Congrats, Niki!